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Should Abraham Have Thrown Out Ishmael?

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Listen to Your Wife

Should Abraham have thrown out Ishmael and his mother? It is a rough moment in The Torah. Readers are often disturbed to read of a father throwing his son out into the desert to die. What are we to learn from this story?

The Story: Why Abraham Threw Out Ishmael

The story begins with G-d promising to make Abraham and Sarah parents. Sarah laughs at this idea. She clearly does not trust G-d to do what he said he would. She believes she is too old to bare children. So, Sarah tells Abraham to "go into" her slave, Hagar, so they might have a child. Abraham does so, and Hagar conceives Ishmael. G-d being G-d, keeps his word, and Sarah becomes pregnant.

Trouble In Paradise

Now there is a problem. G-d had already promised Abraham that he would make mighty nations out of his offspring and not harm them, but now there is another child G-d had not planned on. So, the two brothers grow together, but problems begin to surface in Abraham's house. Sarah says her slave hates her now and looks upon her with disgust. Despite the fact that Sarah had been the one to tell Abraham to go into Hagar, she blames Abraham for Hagar acting rudely to her. As much as I love the mother of our faith (she is one of my favorite Biblical characters), she doesn't look good in this story. Finally, she sees the boys playing together and tells Abraham to cast the boy out because he will not inherit with her son. Ishmael was the older child and would have inherited the bigger portion.

At this point in the story, most readers are pretty upset. Sarah has told Abraham to conceive a child and then demands he throws it out to die. But, the story tells us Abraham was also upset. He was distressed for the sake of his son. So, he did what any of us in such an impossible position might do. He turned to G-d.

Listen to Your Wife

Should Abraham have thrown out Ishmael? G-d said to Abraham, **Genesis 21:12-13 (https://www.biblehub.com/genesis/21-12.htm)**, "Do not be so distressed about the boy and your slave woman. Listen to whatever Sarah tells you, because it is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned. I will make the son of the slave into a nation also, because he is your offspring." There is a lesson here.

G-d is telling Abraham to protect his marriage and trust that G-d will keep his promises. He is asking Abraham to have the faith Sarah lacked, which created the problem. Also, G-d is reminding Abraham of what is important and how one should live their life. Marriage is important. He is

reminding Abraham not to fight and disagree with his wife over something to which there is another solution. G-d felt it was better that Abraham listened to Sarah and saved their marriage because he knew that Ishmael would be saved.

Faith and Promises Kept

When Abraham sent his son out into that desert, he did not believe, as the reader does, that he was sending his child to die. Abraham had faith that G-d was going to keep his word and that his child would be saved. He had already talked to G-d. The thing which was really in danger was his marriage. G-d was keeping his promises. G-d was taking care of his children. Abraham needed to take care of his wife. Abraham needed to keep his promises too, and he had made a promise to Sarah.

And They All Lived Happily Ever After

In the end, it worked out. Ishmael was saved, and he became a mighty nation. Though G-d had not planned for Ishmael and though he tells us that **Ishmael's people will be a people always against every man and every man against them (https://christiancourier.com/articles/ishmael-his-hand-against-every-man)**, G-d kept his promise to Abraham. That is the kind of G-d we serve. Therefore, when we are faced with an impossible decision, we need to remember what G-d has already promised us and let him handle that. We should focus on the other important aspects of our life. G-d will keep his promises, even if it wasn't what he planned.

When a wife is being impossible, and she is angry at her husband for the very thing she told him to do, he should remember G-d's command to "Listen to Sarah and do as she says." For, we should not risk our relationships over things that have already been decided. Have faith that whatever G-d has planned shall come to pass. Ladies, though the text does not say as much, I speculate that this should go both ways. Unlike Sarah, have faith that G-d will keep his promises, and you keep yours to your husband.

Should Abraham Have Thrown out Ishmael?

This is a story about faith, family, and love. Should Abraham have thrown out Ishmael? Yes, because in doing so, he ensured all lived happily ever after. Happiness and peace were never going to exist in Abraham's house as long as Hagar and Sarah were at odds. This way, all were happy, and both sons inherited a kingdom. That is the power of faith. Sometimes, doing what is best for your family means doing something that, at the time, may seem wrong but, in the end, benefits all. Sometimes, what is required is a leap of Faith. Have Faith like Abraham.

To read more about parenting in The Torah, **click here (https://www.patheos.com/blogs/reclaimingthetruth/2023/03/your-relationship-with-g-d-determines-your-childrens-future/)**.

Please check out my **book here (https://www.amazon.com/Faith-Under-Rainbow-Reclaiming-Homosexuality/dp/B09P8BW89K)**.

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